

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BENEDIKT GRONDAL HEADS NEW SDP LEADERSHIP SLATE

REF: REYKJAVIK 1436

1. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, IN WEEKEND CONVENTION, CHOSE FORMER VICE CHAIRMAN BENEDIKT GRONDAL AS NEW CHAIRMAN, REPLACING GYLFI GISLASON, WHO STEPS DOWN REPORTEDLY UNDER PRESSURE FROM WITHIN PARTY (REFTEL). OTHER TOP POSITIONS WENT TO KJARTAN JOHANNSSON, WHO IS NEW VICE CHAIRMAN, AND BJORN JONSSON, PRESIDENT OF ICELANDIC FEDERATION OF LABOR, WHO BECOMES SDP SECRETARY.

2. GRONDAL, 50, JOURNALIST BY PROFESSION, HAS BEEN MP FOR 18 YEARS. BA FROM HARVARD 1946. HAS REPUTATION AS MORE ORTHODOX SOCIAL DEMOCRAT THAN GISLASON, BUT, LIKE PREDECESSOR, IS STRONGLY PRO-WEST AND PRO-NATO, THOUGH HAS BEEN LESS UNEQUIVOCAL THAN GISLASON IN SUPPORT FOR IDF. HE IS AUTHOR OF THE SDP'S PROPOSAL OF COUPLE YEARS AGO ON EVENTUAL UNARMED SUR-

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VEILLANCE STATION MANNED SOLELY BY ICELANDERS, BUT

THIS WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL AFTER LONG TERM STUDY AND ONLY WHEN WORLD CONDITIONS PERMIT. HE HAS, IN INTERIM, CALLED FOR ROLE FOR ICELAND'S COAST GUARD IN SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES IN COOPERATION WITH IDF. HE LED SDP TO TRY TO ALIGN WITH PP AND PA IN ATTEMPTS TO FORM ANOTHER LEFTIST GOVERNMENT THIS SUMMER, BUT BALKED AT ANY COMPROMISES WHICH WOULD IMPAIR IDF. HE WAS GISLASON'S HEIR APPARENT AND ELEVATION WAS WIDELY EXPECTED.

3. KIARTAN JOHANNSSON, 34, ENGINEER AND UNIVERSITY LECTURER, HAS BEEN SDP'S CHIEF TECHNICAL CONSULTANT AND REPRESENTATIVE FOR SEVERAL YEARS. UNSUCCESSFUL ALTHING CANDIDATE IN 1974. MS FROM ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, 1965. REPORTEDLY HAD SUPPORT OF BOTH GISLASON AND GRONDAL FOR NUMBER TWO SPOT.

4. BJORN JONSSON, 59, STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST, IS FORMER MEMBER OF BOTH PEOPLES ALLIANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF LIBERALS AND LEFTISTS AND WAS OLL CABINET MINISTER IN LAST GOVERNMENT, WHO BROUGHT DOWN THE LEFTIST GOVERNMENT IN MAY 1974 BY REFUSING TO CONCUR IN GOI'S STRICT ECONOMIC MEASURES. HE IS PRO-NATO AND PRO-IDF, BUT WHEN IN CABINET FELT IDF COULD REDUCE MILITARY MANPOWER AT LEAST BY HALF. HE NOW SEES IDF AS MEANS OF ABSORBING ICELANDIC LABOR SHOULD RECESSION CAUSE UNEMPLOYMENT. HE AFFILIATED WITH SDP ONLY THIS YEAR AFTER LEAVING CABINET. HE RAN UNSUCCESSFULLY AS SDP MEMBER FOR PARLIAMENT. HE SUCCEEDS EGGERT G. THORSTEINSSON, WHO IS ALSO CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH LABOR, AS SECRETARY. THORSTEINSSON, AFTER FIRST DECLARING INTENTION NOT TO RUN FOR PARTY OFFICE, CONTESTED JOHANNSSON FOR VICE CHAIRMANSHIP.

5. FURTHER DETAILS AND ANALYSIS OF SDP CONVENTION, INCLUDING LEADERSHIP CHANGES, WILL FOLLOW.
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